
COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE OF WATEREE AND SANTEE
RIVERS, SOUTH CAROLINA.

JANUARY 21, 1901.—Referred to the Committee on Commerce and ordered to be printed.

Mr. TILLMAN presented the following

**PETITION FROM THE CITIZENS OF CAMDEN, S. C., PRAYING FOR
THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE WATEREE AND SANTEE RIVERS,
SOUTH CAROLINA.**

THE COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE WATEREE AND SANTEE RIVERS,
SOUTH CAROLINA.

The Wateree River itself is about 67 miles in length from Camden to its mouth, where it joins the Santee. This latter river is about 184 miles long to its mouth, where it is connected with Winyah Bay by the United States Canal, thus giving Camden direct communication by water with the ocean.

The improvement of the Santee and Wateree rivers for steamboat navigation would not only furnish transportation facilities for a large number of the people of South Carolina living along its banks who are out of the easy reach of railroads, but also give the towns on the river which have the railroads a great relief from their excessive freight rates. It is no easy matter to estimate the cultivated acres of land and the number of people which the United States works asked for would be of marked advantage to, from a monetary point of view, but any Senator or Representative in Congress from this State will understand as well as anyone the great advantage to follow the improvement of these streams.

Now, for example, we will take Camden, a city of some 5,000 inhabitants, having four railroads and a river, with the latter not in use because of its being obstructed by sand shoals and snags, which it is in the range of the United States to remove without extraordinary cost.

The total value of the commerce of Camden yearly amounts to about \$2,000,000. In this amount is represented about 20,000 bales cotton, 5,000 tons cotton seed, 15,000 bushels rough rice, 3,000 tons hay, 5,000 tons fertilizer, and 20,000 tons of naval stores, general merchandise, etc.

Now it is perfectly evident that all of the foregoing, which is transported to and from Camden must of necessity travel by rail, since there is no steamboat traffic permissible. This is a hardship on the people, because the railroads can combine and make freight rates which the people can not break without the aid of the river, and they can not get this without the assistance of the United States Government.

Take the aggregate as being \$280,000 paid now on freight yearly. By contrast, take this same amount of freight in the past, when the

condition of the Watree River allowed a small steamer to make occasional trips to Camden, as being \$180,000. By subtracting one from the other it is shown that \$100,000 may be saved yearly to the people by river navigation on freight rates alone. Everyone understands the firm and unmerciful grip railroads have upon our people, when placed in their power, as to freight rates.

A prominent business man of Camden complained to one of the railroad managers that his freight rate was too high, and asked for a reduction. He replied that he could not give it because he was in a combination of railroads which had resolved not to reduce rates. His own inclination, however, was to give the Camden gentleman the relief he asked for, and, continuing, the railroad man said: "Just let a steamboat come up your river and blow a whistle at Camden—then I guarantee that there will be no further delay about the reduction of freight rates that you desire."

It is beyond all question of doubt that the Wateree and Santee rivers are of great importance to the State, in so much that they drain vast areas of country and are capable of being developed into streams of great commercial importance.

The commerce on the Santee River is reported by the United States engineers to amount yearly to about \$2,500,000. With low-water navigation and regular river traffic these figures will probably be increased.

On the Wateree River alone, exclusive of Camden, for the year 1899 there is reported, from the same source, to have been about \$272,000 worth of commerce, consisting for the most part of timber rafts, with no steamboat trade.

If the river was opened for low-water navigation from Camden to the Government canal at Winyah Bay, with steamers plying between these places, of necessity there would be carried over these streams a large portion of the inward and outward freights, because the railroads could not afford to bring heavy groceries from New York to Camden, even at a reduced rate, as cheaply as they could come by Clyde steamship to Winyah Bay, thence by river steamer to Camden. This same rule would hold good in much of the outward freight.

What is needed is a survey of the river from Camden to the mouth of the Santee, with the view of forming a project for the improvement of these streams so that they may be navigated by steamboats of about 6 feet draft at dead low water, and no doubt such a survey would produce a report and map which would prove the necessity for the work asked for through Congress, and that the depth desired would be within reach of acquiring by a reasonable outlay of money.

C. H. Yates, cashier Bank of Camden; W. M. Shannon, attorney at law; F. M. Zemp, druggist; E. V. Zemp, cashier Farmers and Merchants' Bank; C. L. Winkler, attorney at law; A. D. Termed, merchant; Thos. J. Kirkland, attorney at law; Springs & Shannon, merchants and bankers; G. Herman Baum, attorney at law; M. Baum & Co., merchants; Zemp Bros., merchants; Hirsch Bros. & Co., merchants; David Wolfe, merchant; Camden Cotton Mills; P. T. Villepegue, merchant; H. G. Carrison, president Bank of Camden; E. Miller Boykin, president De Kalb Cotton Mill; E. V. Zemp, secretary Camden Loan and Trust Company.